United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

♦ Secretary-General says it is still too early to say whether European peace efforts in Yugoslavia "have failed", more time is needed to assess situation.

♦ Secretary-General says that United Nations will only be able to undertake tasks outlined in Cambodian settlement agreements if human and financial resources are provided in "timely and assured manner".

♦ Political and Security Committee approves drafts on disarmament questions; hears statement by Representative of Republic of Korea urging strict compliance with Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear-Weapons.

♦ Criteria for refugee status and abuses by economically motivated immigrants is among questions discussed in Social Committee.

♦ World Health Organization says 3/4 of HIV infections are transmitted heterosexually in developing world and their number is rising as cause of infection in industrialized nations.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said this morning that it was up to the European members of the Security Council to request a meeting of the Council on the situation in Yugoslavia. So far, he said, he had not heard of any request from the four European members of the Council -- the United Kingdom, France, Austria and Belgium.

The Secretary-General made the comment in reply to questions by correspondents whether it was time for an emergency meeting of the Council to discuss the situation in Yugoslavia.

In another reply, the Secretary-General said it was still too early to say whether the European peace efforts had failed. More time was needed to assess the situation, he said. He was receiving a report this afternoon from his Personal Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance, who had just returned to New York from his mission to Yugoslavia.

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In a related development, the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of Belgium, France and the United Kingdom have transmitted to the Secretary-General in a letter, the Declaration on Yugoslavia, adopted by the 12 Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) at their ministerial meeting held in Rome on 8 November.

In the declaration, the EEC Member States asked the United Nations Security Council to reach agreement on additional measures to enhance the effectiveness of the arms embargo which the Council has adopted. They also invited the Council to take the necessary steps towards imposing an oil embargo.

According to the declaration, the European Community had decided, in the light of the seriousness of the situation, to take a number of measures, including the immediate termination of its trade and cooperation Agreement with Yugoslavia. Additional economical and political measures were being considered for implementation when and wherever necessary, it said.

In other news, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has informed the United Nations that it has supervised an exchange of prisoners in Bosnia-Herzegovina over the weekend, involving over 700 detainees.

The Committee said the release followed the signing on 6 November of a general agreement between the Yugoslav army and the Croatian authorities entrusting the ICRC with the role of neutral intermediary and authorizing it to conduct protection activities for the prisoners. The ICRC said this latest operation reflected the expansion of its programme in Yugoslavia where 40 ICRC delegates were now working throughout the territory.

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The Secretary-General has stated that the signing of the Paris Peace Accords for a Comprehensive Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict on 23 October has created "an historic opportunity for genuine national reconciliation, the holding of free and fair elections and the establishment of a durable peace in Cambodia". The success of the proposed United Nations Transition Authority (UNTAC), however, he said, will depend on the strict and faithful compliance by all parties with the terms of the Agreements and their full cooperation throughout the transitional period.

In a report on Cambodia to the General Assembly of 7 November, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said it was gratifying that the international community and the Cambodians had decided to entrust the United Nations wide-ranging responsibilities with the implementation of the settlement agreements. He pointed out that substantial human and financial resources would be required for the Organization to undertake the tasks foreseen in the accords and suggested that innovative procedures may have to be devised to meet such tasks, in a "timely and assured manner."

The Secretary-General has appointed Ataul Karim of Bangladesh as Chief Liaison Officer of the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC).

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The Advance Mission is expected to be fully deployed by mid-November and will be absorbed into UNTAC in approximately six months.

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Drafts urging the General Assembly to reaffirm its conviction that a general agreement on prohibition or restricted use of specific conventional weapons would significantly reduce the suffering of civilian populations and combatants were approved by the Assembly's Political and Security Committee on Friday.

The Committee approved a total of ten draft resolutions, among which eight would have the Assembly would urge States to comply with the spirit and the provisions of all arms limitation and disarmament agreements. In particular, the Assembly would welcome the role that the United Nations played "in restoring the integrity of certain arms limitation and disarmament agreements and in the removal of threats to peace".

Among those addressing the Committee, the representative of the Republic of Korea, Lee Ryang, regretted that "a certain country suspected of possessing nuclear weapons capability" had not concluded the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguard agreements under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). He called for strict observance of the provisions of the NPT regime by the parties concerned.

In a related development, the Permanent Representative to the United Nations of the Republic of Korea, Chang Hee Roe, has transmitted to the United Nations the text of the Declaration of Non-nuclear Korean Peninsula Peace Initiative made by his country's President, Roh Tae Woo.

The President said in the declaration that at a time when reduction and destruction of nuclear weapons are being carried out world-wide, "North Korea shows no sign of giving up its efforts to build nuclear weapons, while reneging on its professed duties as a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons". There could be no reason or justification for North Korea to develop nuclear weapons or evade international inspection of its nuclear facilities, he said. He called on the North Korean authorities to immediately take steps corresponding to his declaration.

The Declaration was transmitted to the Secretary-General in a letter dated 8 November.

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The General Assembly's Social Committee today heard divergent views on what constitutes a refugee and how to tackle the problems of long-standing, as well as emergency refugee situations.

Canada said measures must be implemented to provide for refugees' needs, but those measures must not be abused by economically motivated refugees,

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whose numbers were growing, especially in the developed world. Albania said citizens leaving that country could not be considered political refugees but simply economic immigrants, and their problems should be addressed only in that framework.

The need to support development, democracy and peace to prevent refugee flows was stressed by Chile. China stated that a case-by-case approach to the displaced persons' problems must be employed with due respect for the principle of State sovereignty and the consent of the Governments concerned.

Recent diplomatic efforts to resolve the crises in Afghanistan and Cambodia were praised by speakers who expressed hope that the resolution of conflicts in those regions would lead to permanent repatriation of millions of people. The representative of Zimbabwe said that alternative solutions must be found to the refugee situation in the Horn of Africa since the political situation in most countries in that area had not been stabilized and thus voluntary repatriation was not possible.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) says in a study issued today that heterosexual intercourse has become the dominant form of HIV transmission in much of the developing world, and is rising as a cause of infection in industrialized nations, including the United States.

The study shows that three-quarters of the 8 to 10 million adults with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) have been infected through heterosexual transmission. It says that in the United States, while the HIV first spread primarily among homosexual or bisexual men and injecting drug users, over the past decade it has been increasingly transmitted through heterosexual intercourse.

In a press release issued at Headquarters, the Director of the WHO Global Programme on AIDS, Michael H. Merson, said that the revelation by the American Basketball player, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, that he has been infected by HIV "drives home a basic truth about the AIDS pandemic". Mr. Johnson was telling the sexually active people, the WHO Director said, that whatever their sexual preference, they simply could not afford to consider themselves invulnerable.

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